

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 16862

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: MILI, VS

SUBJECT: TROOP MORALE RELATIVELY HIGH IN MR 3

FOLLOWING MSG REC FROM AMCONSUL BIEN HOA ON SEP 21 ACTION
EMBASSY SAIGON INFO USDAO SAIGON CANTHO DANANG NHA TRANG
REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO:

C O N F I D E N T I A L BIEN HOA 0508

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI VS

SUBJECT: TROOP MORALE RELATIVELY HIGH IN MR 3

SUMMARY: ON-SPOT SURVEY OF TROOP MORALE CONDUCTED RECENTLY BY
CONGEN FIELD STAFF SHOWS, AS ANTICIPATED, MORALE FLUCTUATES FROM
ONE AREA TO ANOTHER DUE FACTORS SUCH AS QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP,
ISOLATION AND EXPOSURE TO DANGER. GENERAL CONSENSUS, HOWEVER,
SUPPORTS CONCLUSION THAT TROOP MORALE HAS NOT DETERIORATED SINCE
ONSET OF CEASE-FIRE I. WE FOUND USUAL G.I. GRIPES BUT NOT ONES
WHICH WOULD CAUSE EVEN SMALL NUMBER TO DEFECT TO OTHER SIDE.
WE ALSO FOUND NUMBER OF DESERTIONS HAD DECREASED OVER PAST FEW
MONTHS. THOUGH PAINSTAKING SURVEY WAS NOT CONDUCTED, BELIEVE
SAMPLING WAS SUFFICIENTLY BROAD TO GIVE REPRESENTATIVE OVERVIEW
OF TROOP MORALE THIS REGION. END SUMMARY.

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1. IN ORDER TO ASCERTAIN EXTENT TO WHICH STORIES ABOUT ARVN AND RF/PF SUFFERING FROM MORALE PROBLEMS WERE VALID, CONGEN FIELD STAFF WAS ASKED TO LOOK INTO QUESTION. SOURCES OF STORIES HAD LEFT IMPRESSION THAT INROADS HAD BEEN MADE BY COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA APPEALING TO GVN TROOPS TO LAY DOWN ARMS NOW THAT WAR WAS OVER. FINDINGS VERY DEFINITELY SHOW TROOPS HAVE WIDE RANGE OF USUAL "G.I. GRIPES" BUT NO SERIOUS DISENCHANTMENT WITH GVN WHICH WOULD CAUSE THEM TO DEFECT TO OTHER SIDE. NOR ARE THEY AN MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO COMMUNIST BLANDISHMENTS SINCE WAR FORMALLY ENDED. MOST FREQUENTLY VOICED COMPLAINT WAS HARDSHIP CAUSED BY SPIRALLING INFLATION, THUS MAKING IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR TROOPS TO SUPPORT FAMILIES ON LOW MILITARY PAY. THREE THOUSAND PIASTER MONTHLY RICE ALLOWANCE CAME IN FOR ITS SHARE OF CRITICISM. GVN GUARANTEES TO STABILIZE RICE PRICES TO MILITARY REPORTEDLY NOT ENTIRELY SATISFACTORY SOLUTION DUE TO SHORTAGES AT CERTAIN MILITARY OUTLETS WHICH, IN TURN, REQUIRE TROOPS TO COMPETE WITH OPEN MARKET CONSUMERS. SOME RESPONDENTS MADE UNFAVORABLE COMPARISONS THEIR SALARIES WITH MSW BENEFITS PAYABLE TO REFUGEES. ANOTHER PROBLEM AFFECTING MORALE IS POSSIBILITY OF LOSS OF LIFE OR LIMB FROM DETONATION OF MINES DURING CLEARING OPERATIONS. (THIS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN GIA DINH PROVINCE WHERE 6 KILLED, 28 WOUNDED IN MINE INCIDENTS IN RECENT PERIOD.) TROOPS ARE, THEREFORE, UNDERSTANDABLY UNHAPPY ABOUT THIS TYPE OF HAZARDOUS DUTY IN PRESUMED PERIOD OF PEACE. OTHER MINOR COMPLAINTS, INTER ALIA, ARE GF SCARCITIES COMMISSARY SUPPLIES; TOO LITTLE FREE TIME FOR SECONDARY JOBS; CORRUPTION OF COMMANDING OFFICERS; LACK EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES; SLOWNESS OF PROMOTIONS; INADEQUATE ARMY HOUSING.

2. ON OTHER HAND, THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT BENEFITS SUCH AS FREE MEDICAL CARE, CLOTHING ISSUANCE AND COMMISSARY PRIVILEGES TENDED OFFSET LOW MILITARY PAY. CONGEN SOMEWHAT SURPRISED LEARN THAT MAJORITY THOSE INTERVIEWED DO NOT FEEL THEY COULD DO BETTER OUTSIDE MILITARY CONSIDERING PRESENT ECONOMIC SITUATION. MANY SOLDIERS ARE WORRIED ABOUT THEIR FUTURE AFTER DEMOBILIZATION AND ENTHUSIASTICALLY ENDORSE DR. DAN'S PLAN SETTLE DEMOBILIZED SOLDIERS ON VACANT FARMLAND, CONTINUE THEIR MILITARY PAY FOR SIX MONTHS THEN ISSUE TITLE TO LAND IF FARMED SUCCESSFULLY.

3. EXERCISE DEMONSTRATED THAT RF/PF MORALE BETTER THAN ARVN, BUT THIS OFTEN DUE PROXIMITY THESE UNITS TO HOME TERRITORY PERMITTING

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MORE FREQUENT FAMILY VISITATION, HELPING WITH HARVESTS ETC. DESERTION RATES FOR BOTH TERRITORIAL FORCES AND ARVN ARE CONSIDERABLY LOWER THAN LAST YEAR WHICH PERHAPS BEST AVAILABLE INDICATOR THAT TROOP MORALE IN MR 3 AT RELATIVELY HIGH LEVEL. WALKINSHAW
APPLING

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NNN

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